



ALMORAN AND HAMET,

VOLUME THE SECOND.

CHAP. XI.



LMORAN had now reached the gallery; and when the multitude saw him, they shouted as in triumph, and demanded that he should surrender.

Hamet, who also perceived him at a distance, and was unwilling that any violence should be offered to his person, pressed forward, and when he was come near, commanded silence. At this moment Almorán, with a loud voice, reproached them with impiety and folly; and appealing to the power, whom in his person they had offended, the air suddenly grew dark, a flood of lightning descended from the sky, and a peal of thunder was articulated into these words;

Divided sway, the God who reigns alone
Abhors; and gives to Almorán the throne.

The multitude stood aghast at the prodigy; and hiding their faces with their hands, every one departed in silence and confusion, and Hamet and Omar were left alone. Omar was taken by some of the soldiers who had adhered to Almorán, but Hamet made his escape.

Almorán, whose wishes were thus far accomplished by the intervention of a power superior to his own, exulted in the anticipation of that happiness which he now supposed to be secured; and was mortified in his opinion, that he had been wretched only because he had

been weak, and that to multiply and not to suppress his wishes was the way to acquire felicity.

As he was returning from the gallery, he was met by Osmyn and Caled, who had heard the supernatural declaration in his behalf, and learned it's effects. Almorán, in that hasty flow of unbounded but capricious favour, which, in contracted minds, is the effect only of unexpected good fortune, raised Osmyn from his feet to his bosom: 'As in the trial,' said he, 'thou hast been faithful, I now invest thee with a superior trust. The toils of state shall from this moment devolve upon thee; and from this moment, the delights of empire unallayed shall be mine: I will recline at ease, remote from every eye but those that reflect my own felicity; the felicity that I shall taste in secret, surrounded by the smiles of beauty, and the gaieties of youth. Like Heaven, I will reign unseen; and like Heaven, though unseen, I will be adored.' Osmyn received this delegation with a tumultuous pleasure, that was expressed only by silence and confusion. Almorán remarked it; and exulting in the pride of power, he suddenly changed his aspect, and regarding Osmyn, who was yet blushing, and whose eyes were swimming in tears of gratitude, with a stern and ardent countenance; 'Let me, however,' said he, 'warn thee to be watchful in thy trust: beware, that no rude commotion violate my peace by thy fault; lest my anger sweep thee in a moment to destruction.' He then

then directed his eye to Caled: 'And thou too,' said he, 'hast been faithful; be thou next in honour and in power to Osmyn. Guard both of you my paradise from dread and care; fulfil the duty that I have assigned you, and live.'

He was then informed by a messenger, that Hamet had escaped, and that Omar was taken. As he now despised the power both of Hamet and Omar, he expressed neither concern nor anger that Hamet had fled; but he ordered Omar to be brought before him.

When Omar appeared bound and disarmed, he regarded him with a smile of insult and derision; and asked him, what he had now to hope. 'I have,' indeed, said Omar, 'much less to hope, than thou hast to fear.'—'Thy insolence,' said Almoran, 'is equal to thy folly: what power on earth is there, that I should fear?'—'Thy own,' said Omar. 'I have not leisure now,' replied Almoran, 'to hear the paradoxes of thy philosophy explained: but to shew thee, that I fear not thy power, thou shalt live. I will leave thee to hopeless regret; to wiles that have been scorned and defeated; to the unheeded petulance of dotage; to the fondness that is repayed with neglect; to restless wishes, to credulous hopes, and to derided command: to the slow and complicated torture of despid old age; and that, when thou shalt long have abhorred thy being, shall destroy it.'—'The misery,' said Omar, 'which thou hast menaced, it is not in thy power to inflict. As thou hast taken from me all that I possessed by the bounty of thy father, it is true that I am poor; it is true also, that my knees are now feeble, and bend with the weight of years that is upon me. I am, as thou art, a man; and therefore I have erred: but I have still kept the narrow path in view with a faithful vigilance, and to that I have soon returned; the past, therefore, I do not regret; and the future, I have no cause to fear. In Him who is most merciful, I have hope; and in that hope even now I rejoice before thee. My portion in the present hour, is adversity: but I receive it, not only with humility, but thankfulness; for

'I know, that whatever is ordained is best.'

Almoran, in whose heart there were no traces of Omar's virtue, and therefore no foundation for his confidence; sustained himself against their force, by treating them as hypocrisy and affectation: 'I know,' said he, 'that thou hast long learned to echo the specious and pompous sounds, by which hypocrites conceal their wretchedness, and excite the admiration of folly and the contempt of wisdom: yet thy walk in this place shall be still unrestrained. Here the splendour of my felicity shall fill thy heart with envy, and cover thy face with confusion; and from thee shall the world be instructed, that the enemies of Almoran can move no passion in his breast but contempt, and that most to punish them is to permit them to live.'

Omar, whose eye had till now been fixed upon the ground, regarded Almoran with a calm but steady countenance: 'Here then,' said he, 'will I follow thee, constant as thy shadow; though, as thy shadow, unnoticed or neglected: here shall mine eye watch those evils that were appointed from everlasting, to attend upon guilt; and here shall my voice warn thee of their approach. From thy breast may they be averted by righteousness; for without this, though all the worlds that roll above thee should, to aid thee, unite all their power, that power can aid thee only to be wretched.'

Almoran, in all the pride of gratified ambition, invested with dominion that had no limits, and allied with powers that were more than mortal; was over-awed by this address, and his countenance grew pale. But the next moment, disdaining to be thus controuled by the voice of a slave, his cheeks were suffused with the blushes of indignation: he turned from Omar, in scorn, anger, and confusion, without reply; and Omar departed with the calm dignity of a benevolent and superior being, to whom the smiles and frowns of terrestrial tyranny were alike indifferent, and in whom abhorrence of the turpitude of vice was mingled with compassion for its folly.

CHAP. XII.

IN the mean time, Almeida, who had been conveyed to an apartment in Almorán's seraglio, and delivered to the care of those who attended upon his women, suffered all that grief and terror could inflict upon a generous, tender, and a delicate mind; yet in this complicated distress, her attention was principally fixed upon Hamet. The disappointment of his hope, and the violation of his right, were the chief objects of her regret and her fears, in all that had already happened, and in all that was still to come; every insult that might be offered to herself, she considered as an injury to him. Yet the thoughts of all that he might suffer in her person, gave way to her apprehension, of what might befall him in his own: in his situation, every calamity that her imagination could conceive, was possible; her thoughts were, therefore, bewildered amidst an endless variety of dreadful images, which started up before them which way soever they were turned; and it was impossible that she could gain any certain intelligence of his fate, as the splendid prison in which she was now confined, was surrounded by mutes and eunuchs, of whom nothing could be learned, or in whose report no confidence could be placed.

While her mind was in this state of agitation and distress, she perceived the door open, and the next moment Almorán entered the apartment. When she saw him, she turned from him with a look of unutterable anguish; and hiding her face in her veil, she burst into tears. The tyrant was moved with her distress; for unfeeling obduracy is the vice only of the old, whose sensibility has been worn away by the habitual perpetration of reiterated wrongs.

He approached her with looks of kindness, and his voice was involuntarily modulated to pity; she was, however, too much absorbed in her own sorrows, to reply. He gazed upon her with tenderness and admiration; and taking her hand into his own, he pressed it ardently to his bosom: his compassion soon kindled into desire, and from soothing her distress, he began to solicit her love. This instantly roused her attention, and her grief gave way

to resentment: she turned from him with a firm and haughty step, and instead of answering his professions, reproached him with her wrongs. Almorán, that he might at once address her virtue and her passions, observed, that though he had loved her from the first moment he had seen her, yet he had concealed his passion even from her, till it had received the sanction of an invisible and superior power; that he came, therefore, the messenger of Heaven; and that he offered her unrivalled empire and everlasting love. To this she answered only by an impatient and fond enquiry after Hamet. 'Think not of Hamet,' said Almorán; 'for why should he who is rejected of Heaven, be still the favourite of Almeida?'—'If thy hand,' said Almeida; 'could quench in everlasting darkness, that vital spark of intellectual fire, which the word of the Almighty has kindled in my breast to burn for ever, then might Almeida cease to think of Hamet; but while that shall live, whatever form it shall inhabit, or in whatever world it shall reside, his image shall be for ever present, and to him shall my love be for ever true.' This glowing declaration of her love for Hamet, was immediately succeeded by a tender anxiety for his safety: and a sudden reflection upon the probability of his death, and the danger of his situation if alive, threw her again into tears.

Almorán, whom the ardour and impetuosity of her passions kept sometimes silent, and sometimes threw into confusion, again attempted to sooth and comfort her: she often urged him to tell her what was become of his brother, and he has often evaded the question. As she was about to renew her enquiry, and reflected that it had before been often made, and had not yet been answered, she thought that Almorán had already put him to death: this threw her into a new agony, of which he did not immediately discover the cause; but as he soon learned it from her reproaches and exclamations, he perceived that he could not hope to be heard, while she was in doubt about the safety of Hamet. In order, therefore, to sooth her mind, and prevent it's being longer possessed with an image that excluded every other; he assumed a look of concern and astonishment at the imputation of a crime, which was at once so horrid and

so unnecessary. After a solemn deprecation of such enormous guilt, he observed, that as it was now impossible for Hamet to succeed as his rival, either in empire or in love, without the breach of a command, which he knew his virtue would implicitly obey; he had no motive either to desire his death, or to restrain his liberty: 'His walk,' says he, 'is still uncircumscribed in Persia; and, except this chamber, there is no part of the palace to which he is not admitted.'

To this declaration Almeida listened, as to the music of paradise; and it suspended for a while every passion, but her love: the sudden ease of her mind made her regardless of all about her; and she had in this interval suffered Almorán to remove her veil, without reflecting upon what he was doing. The moment she recollected herself, she made a gentle effort to recover it, with some confusion, but without anger. The pleasure that was expressed in her eyes, the blush that glowed upon her cheek, and the contest about the veil, which to an amorous imagination had an air of dalliance, concurred to heighten the passion of Almorán almost to phrensy: she perceived her danger in his looks, and her spirits instantly took the alarm. He seized her hand, and gazing ardently upon her, he conjured her, with a tone and emphasis that strongly expressed the tumultuous vehemence of his wishes, that she would renounce the rites which had been forbidden above, and that she would receive him to whom by miracle she had been allotted.

Almeida, whom the manner and voice of Almorán had terrified into silence, answered him at first only with a look that expressed aversion and disdain, over-awed by fear. 'Wilt thou not,' said Almorán, 'fulfil the decrees of Heaven? I conjure thee, by Heaven, to answer.' From this solemn reference to Heaven, Almeida derived new fortitude: she instantly recollected, that she stood in the presence of Him, by whose permission only every other power, whether visible or invisible, can dispense evil or good: 'Urge no more,' said she, 'as the decree of Heaven, that which is inconsistent with divine perfection. Can he, in whose hand my heart is, command me to wed the man whom he has not enabled me to love? Can the Pure,

the Just, the Merciful, have ordained that I should suffer embraces which I loath, and violate vows which His laws permitted me to make? Can He have ordained a perfidious, a loveless, and a joyless prostitution? What if a thousand prodigies should concur to enforce it a thousand times, the deed itself would be a stronger proof that those prodigies were the works of darkness, than those prodigies that the deed was commanded by the Father of light.'

Almorán, whose hopes were now blasted to the root, who perceived that the virtue of Almeida could neither be deceived nor overborne; that she at once contemned his power, and abhorred his love; gave way to all the furies of his mind, which now slumbered no more: his countenance expressed at once anger, indignation, and despair; his gesture became furious, and his voice was lost in menaces and execrations. Almeida beheld him with an earnest yet steady countenance; till he vowed to revenge the indignity, he had suffered, upon Hamet. At the name of Hamet, her fortitude forsook her; the pride of virtue gave way to the softness of love; her cheeks became pale, her lips trembled, and taking hold of the robe of Almorán, she threw herself at his feet. His fury was at first restrained by hope and expectation; but when from her words, which grief and terror had rendered scarce articulate, he could learn only that she was pleading for Hamet, he burst from her in an ecstasy of rage; and forcing his robe from her hand, with a violence that dragged her after it, he rushed out of the chamber, and left her prostrate upon the ground.

As he passed through the gallery with a hasty and disordered pace, he was seen by Omar; who knowing that he was returned from an interview with Almeida, and conjecturing from his appearance what had happened, judged that he ought not to neglect this opportunity to warn him once more of the delusive phantoms, which, under the appearance of pleasure, were leading him to destruction: he, therefore, followed him unperceived, till he had reached the apartment in which he had been used to retire alone, and heard again the loud and tumultuous exclamations, which were wrung from his heart

heart by the anguish of disappointment: 'What have I gained,' said he, 'by absolute dominion! The slave who, secluded from the gales of life and from the light of heaven, toils without hope in the darkness of the mine, riots in the delights of paradise compared with me. By the caprice of one woman, I am robbed not only of enjoyment but of peace, and condemned for ever to the torment of unsatisfied desire.'

Omar, who was impatient to apprise him that he was not alone, and to prevent his disclosing sentiments which he wished to conceal, now threw himself upon the ground at his feet. 'Presumptuous slave!' said Almorán, 'from whence, and wherefore art thou come?'—'I am come,' said Omar, 'to tell thee, that not the caprice of a woman, but the wishes of Almorán, have made Almorán wretched.' The king, stung with the reproach, drew back, and with a furious look, laid his hand upon his poignard; but was immediately restrained from drawing it, by his pride. 'I am come,' said Omar, 'to repeat that truth, upon which, great as thou art, thy fate is suspended. Thy power extends not to the mind of another; exert it, therefore, upon thy own: suppress the wishes which thou canst not fulfil; and secure the happiness that is within thy reach.'

Almorán, who could bear no longer to hear the precepts which he disdained to practise, sternly commanded Omar to depart: 'Be gone,' said he, 'left I crush thee like a noisome reptile, which men cannot but abhor, though it is too contemptible to be feared.'—'I go,' said Omar, 'that my warning voice may yet again recal thee to the path of wisdom and of peace, if yet again I shall behold thee while it is to be found.'

CHAP. XIII.

ALMORAN was now left alone; and throwing himself upon a sofa, he sat some time motionless and silent. He revolved in his mind the wishes that had been gratified, and the happiness of which he had been disappointed: 'I desired,' said he, 'the pomp and power of undivided dominion; and Hamet was driven from the throne

which he shared with me, by a voice from heaven: I desired to break off his marriage with Almeida, and it was broken off by a prodigy, when no human power could have accomplished my desire. It was my wish also to have the person of Almeida in my power, and this wish also has been gratified; yet I am still wretched. But I am wretched, only because the means have not been adequate to the end: what I have hitherto obtained, I have not desired for itself; and of that, for which I desired it, I am not possessed: I am, therefore, still wretched, because I am weak. With the soul of Almorán, I should have the form of Hamet: then my wishes would indeed be filled; then would Almeida bless me with consenting beauty, and the splendour of my power should distinguish only the intervals of my love; my enjoyments would then be certain and permanent, neither blasted by disappointment, nor withered by satiety!' When he had uttered these reflections with the utmost vehemence and agitation, his face was again obscured by gloom and despair; his posture was again fixed; and he was falling back into his former state of silent abstraction; when he was suddenly roused by the appearance of the Genius, the sincerity of whose friendship he began to distrust.

'Almorán,' said the Genius, 'if thou art not yet happy, know that my powers are not yet exhausted: fear me not, but let thine ear be attentive to my voice.' The Genius then stretched out his hand towards him, in which there was an emerald of great lustre, cut into a figure that had four and twenty sides, on each of which was engraven a different letter. 'Thou seest,' said he, 'this talisman: on each side of it is engraven one of those mysterious characters, of which are formed all the words of all the languages that are spoken by angels; genii, and men. This shall enable thee to change thy figure: and what, under the form of Almorán, thou canst not accomplish; thou shalt still be able to effect, if it can be effected by thee, in the form of any other. Point only to the letters that compose the name of him whose appearance thou wouldst assume, and it is done. Remember only, that upon

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him,

‘him, whose appearance thou shalt assume, thine shall be impress, till thou restorest his own. Hide the charm in thy bosom, and avail thyself of it’s power.’ Almorán received the talisman in a transport of gratitude and joy, and the Genius immediately disappeared.

The use of this talisman was so obvious, that it was impossible to overlook it. Almorán instantly conceived the design with which it was given, and determined instantly to put it in execution: ‘I will now,’ said he, ‘assume the figure of Hamet; and my love, in all it’s ardour, shall be returned by Almeida.’ As his fancy kindled at the anticipation of his happiness, he stood musing in a pleasing suspense, and indulged himself in the contemplation of the several gradations, by which he should ascend to the summit of his wishes.

Just at this moment, Osmyn, whom he had commanded to attend him at this hour, approached his apartment: Almorán was roused by the sound of his foot, and supposed it to be Omar, who had again intruded upon his privacy; he was enraged at the interruption which had broken a series of imaginations so flattering and luxurious; he snatched out his poignard, and lifting up his arm for the stroke, hastily turned round to have stabbed him; but seeing Osmyn, he discovered his mistake just in time to prevent the blow.

Osmyn, who was not conscious of any crime, nor indeed of any act that could have given occasion of offence; started back terrified and amazed, and stood trembling in doubt whether to remain or to withdraw. Almorán, in the mean time, sheathed the instrument of death, and bid him fear nothing, for he should not be hurt. He then turned about; and putting his hand to his forehead, stood again silent in a musing posture: he recollected, that if he assumed the figure of Hamet, it was necessary he should give orders for Hamet to be admitted to Almeida, as he would otherwise be excluded by the delegates of his own authority; turning, therefore, to Osmyn, ‘Remember,’ said he, ‘that whenever Hamet shall return, it is my command, that he be admitted to Almeida.’

Osmyn, who was pleased with an opportunity of recommending himself

to Almorán, by praising an act of generous virtue which he supposed him now to exert in favour of his brother, received the command with a look, that expressed not only approbation but joy: ‘Let the sword of destruction,’ said he, ‘be the guard of the tyrant; the strength of my lord shall be the bonds of love: those, who honour thee as Almorán, shall rejoice in thee as the friend of Hamet.’ To Almorán, who was conscious to no kindness of his brother, the praise of Osmyn was a reproach: he was offended at the joy which he saw kindled in his countenance, by a command to shew favour to Hamet; and was fired with sudden rage at that condemnation of his real conduct, which was implied by an encomium on the generosity of which he assumed the appearance for a malevolent and perfidious purpose: his brow was contracted, his lip quivered, and the hilt of his dagger, was again grasped in his hand. Osmyn was again overwhelmed with terror and confusion; he had again offended, but knew not his offence. In the mean time, Almorán recollecting that to express displeasure against Osmyn was to betray his own secret, endeavoured to suppress his anger; but his anger was succeeded by remorse, regret, and disappointment. The anguish of his mind broke out in imperfect murmurs: ‘What I am,’ said he, ‘is to this wretch, the object not only of hatred but of scorn; and he commends only what I am not, in what to him I would seem to be.’

These sounds, which, though not articulate, were yet uttered with great emotion, were still mistaken by Osmyn for the overflowings of capricious and causeless anger: ‘My life,’ said he to himself, ‘is even now wavering in a doubtful balance. Whenever I approach this tyrant, I tread the borders of the grave: like a hood-winked wretch, who is left to wander near the brink of a precipice, I know my danger; but which way soever I turn, I know not whether I shall incur or avoid destruction!’

In these reflections, did the sovereign and the slave pass those moments, in which the sovereign intended to render the slave subservient to his pleasure or his security; and the slave intended to express a zeal which he really felt, and a homage

a homage which his heart had already paid. Osmyn was at length, however, dismissed, with an assurance that all was well; and Almoran was again left to reflect with anguish upon the past, to regret the present, and to anticipate the future with solicitude, anxiety, and perturbation.

He was, however, determined to assume the figure of his brother, by the talisman which had been put into his power by the Genius: but just as he was about to form the spell, he recollected, that by the same act he would impress his own likeness upon Hamet, who would consequently be invested with his power, and might use it to his destruction. This held him some time in suspense; but reflecting that Hamet might not, perhaps, be apprized of his advantage, till it was too late to improve it; that he was now a fugitive, and probably alone, leaving Persia behind him with all the speed he could make; and that, at the worst, if he should be still near, if he should know the transformation as soon as it should be made, and should instantly take the most effectual measures to improve it; yet as he could dissolve the charm in a moment, whenever it should be necessary for his safety, no formidable danger could be incurred by the experiment, to which he, therefore, proceeded without delay.

CHAP. XIV.

IN the mean time, Hamet, to whom his own safety was of no importance but for the sake of Almeida, resolved, if possible, to conceal himself near the city. Having, therefore, reached the confines of the desert, by which it was bounded on the east, he quitted his horse, and determined to remain there till the multitude was dispersed, and the darkness of the evening might conceal his return, when in less than an hour he could reach the palace.

He sat down at the foot of the mountain Kabsel, without considering, that in this place he was most likely to be found, as those who travel the desert seldom fail to enter the cave that winds its way under the mountain, to drink of the water that issues there from a clear and copious spring.

He reviewed the scenes of the day,

that was now nearly passed, with a mixture of astonishment and distress, to which no description can be equal. The sudden and amazing change that a few hours had made in his situation, appeared like a wild and distressful dream, from which he almost doubted whether he should not wake to the power and the felicity that he had lost. He sat some time bewildered in the hurry and multiplicity of his thoughts, and at length burst out into passionate exclamations: 'What,' says he, 'and where am I? Am I, indeed, Hamet; that son of Solyman who divided the dominion of Persia with his brother, and who possessed the love of Almeida alone? Dreadful vicissitude! I am now an outcast, friendless and forlorn; without an associate, and without a dwelling: for me the cup of adversity overflows, and the last dregs of sorrow have been wrung out for my portion: the powers not only of the earth, but of the air, have combined against me; and how can I stand alone before them! But is there no Power that will interpose in my behalf? If He, who is supreme, is good, I shall not perish. But wherefore am I thus? Why should the desires of vice be accomplished by superior powers; and why should superior powers be permitted to disappoint the expectations of virtue? Yet let me not rashly question the ways of Him, in whose balance the world is weighed: by Him, every evil is rendered subservient to good; and by His wisdom, the happiness of the whole is secured. Yet I am but a part only, and for a part only I can feel. To me, what is that goodness of which I do not partake? In my cup the gall is unmixed; and have I not, therefore, a right to complain? But what have I said! Let not the gloom that surrounds me, hide me from the prospect of immortality. Shall not eternity atone for time? Eternity, to which the duration of ages is but as an atom to a world! Shall I not, when this momentary separation is past, again meet Almeida to part no more; and shall not a purer flame than burns upon the earth, unite us? Even at this moment, her mind, which not the frauds of force can taint or alienate, is mine; that plea-

'sure which she reserved for me, cannot be taken by force; it is in the consent alone that it subsists; and from the joy that she feels, and from that only, proceeds the joy she can bestow.'

With these reflections he soothed the anguish of his mind, till the dreadful moment arrived, in which the power of the talisman took place, and the figure of Almorán was changed into that of Hamet, and the figure of Hamet into that of Almorán.

At the moment of transformation, Hamet was seized with a sudden languor, and his faculties were suspended as by the stroke of death. When he recovered, his limbs still trembled, and his lips were parched with thirst: he rose, therefore, and entering the cavern, at the mouth of which he had been sitting, he stooped over the well to drink; but glancing his eyes upon the water, he saw, with astonishment and horror, that it reflected, not his own countenance, but that of his brother. He started back from the prodigy; and supporting himself against the side of the rock, he stood some time like a statue, without the power of recollection: but at length the thought suddenly rushed into his mind, that the same sorcery which had prevented his marriage, and driven him from the throne, was still practised against him; and that the change of his figure to that of Almorán, was the effect of Almorán's having assumed his likeness, to obtain, in this disguise, whatever Almeida could bestow. This thought, like a whirlwind of the desert, totally subverted his mind; his fortitude was borne down, and his hopes were rooted up; no principles remained to regulate his conduct, but all was phrensy, confusion, and despair. He rushed out of the cave with a furious and distracted look; and went in haste towards the city, without having formed any design, or considered any consequence that might follow.

The shadows of the mountains were now lengthened by the declining sun; and the approach of evening had invited Omar to meditate in a grove, that was adjacent to the garden of the palace. From this place he was seen at some distance by Hamet, who came up to him with a hasty and disordered pace; and Omar drew back with a

cold and distant reverence, which the power and the character of Almorán concurred to excite. Hamet, not reflecting upon the cause of this behaviour, was offended, and reproached him with the want of that friendship he had so often professed: the vehemence of his expression and demeanour, suited well with the appearance of Almorán; and Omar, as the best proof of that friendship which had been impeached, took this opportunity to repeat his admonitions in the behalf of Hamet: 'Whatever evil,' said he, 'thou canst bring upon Hamet, will be doubled to thyself: to his virtues, the Power that fills infinitude is a friend, and he can be afflicted only till they are perfect; but thy sufferings will be the punishment of vice, and as long as thou art vicious they must increase.'

Hamet, who instantly recollected for whom he was mistaken, and the anguish of whose mind was for a moment suspended by this testimony of esteem and kindness, which could not possibly be feigned, and which was paid him at the risk of life, when it could not be known that he received it; ran forward to embrace the hoary sage, who had been the guide of his youth, and cried out in a voice that was broken by contending passions. 'The face is the face of Almorán; but the heart is the heart of Hamet.'

Omar was struck dumb with astonishment; and Hamet, who could not bear to be longer mistaken, related all the circumstances of his transformation, and reminded him of some particulars which could be known only to themselves: 'Canst thou not yet believe,' said he, 'that I am Hamet? when thou hast this day seen me banished from my kingdom; when thou hast now met me a fugitive returning from the desert; and when I learnt from thee, since the sun was risen, which is not yet set, that more than mortal powers were combined against me?'—'I now believe,' said Omar, 'that thou indeed art Hamet.'—'Stay me not then,' said Hamet; 'but come with me to revenge.'—'Beware,' said Omar, 'lest thou endanger the loss of more than empire and Almeida.'—'If not to revenge,' said Hamet, 'I may at least be permitted to punish.'—'Thy mind,'

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says Omar, 'is now in such a state, that to punish the crime by which thou hast been wronged, will dip thee in the guilt of blood. Why else are we forbidden to take vengeance for ourselves? and why is it reserved as the prerogative of the Most High? In Him, and in Him alone, it is goodness guided by wisdom: He approves the means, only as necessary to the end; He wounds only to heal, and destroys only to save; He has complacency, not in the evil, but in the good only which it is appointed to produce. Remember, therefore, that he, to whom the punishment of another is sweet; though his act may be just with respect to others, with respect to himself it is a deed of darkness, and abhorred by the Almighty.' Hamet, who had stood abstracted in the contemplation of the new injury he had suffered, while Omar was persuading him not to revenge it, started from his posture in all the wildness of distraction; and bursting away from Omar, with an ardent and furious look, hastened toward the palace, and was soon out of sight.

CHAP. XV.

IN the mean time, Almorán, after having effected the transformation, was met, as he was going to the apartment of Almeida, by Osmyn. Osmyn had already experienced the misery of dependent greatness, that kept him continually under the eye of a capricious tyrant, whose temper was various as the gales of summer, and whose anger was sudden as the bolt of heaven; whose purpose and passions were dark and impetuous as the midnight storm, and at whose command death was inevitable as the approach of time. When he saw Almorán, therefore, in the likeness of Hamet, he felt a secret desire to apprise him of his situation, and offer him his friendship.

Almorán, who with the form assumed the manners of Hamet, addressed Osmyn with a mild though mournful countenance: 'At length,' said he, 'the will of Almorán alone is law; does it permit me to hold a private rank in this place, without molestation?'—'It permits,' said Osmyn, 'yet more; he has commanded, that you should

'have admittance to Almeida.' Almorán, whose vanity betrayed him to flatter his own power in the person of Hamet, replied with a smile: 'I know, that Almorán, who presides like a god in silent and distant state, reveals the secrets of his will to thee; I know that thou art—' 'I am,' said Osmyn, 'of all thou seest, most wretched.' At this declaration, Almorán turned short, and fixed his eyes upon Osmyn with a look of surprize and anger: 'Does not the favour of Almorán,' said he, 'whose smile is power, and wealth, and honour, shine upon thee?'—'My lord,' said Osmyn, 'I know so well the severity of thy virtue, that if I should, even for thy sake, become perfidious to thy brother—' Almorán, who was unable to preserve the character of Hamet, with propriety, interrupted him with a fierce and haughty tone: 'How!' said he, 'perfidious to my brother! to Almorán perfidious!'

Osmyn, who had now gone too far to recede, and who still saw before him the figure of Hamet, proceeded in his purpose: 'I knew,' said he, 'that in thy judgment I should be condemned; and yet, the preservation of life is the strongest principle of nature, and the love of virtue is her proudest boast.'—'Explain thyself,' said Almorán, 'for I cannot comprehend thee.'—'I mean,' said Osmyn, 'that he, whose life depends upon the caprice of a tyrant, is like the wretch whose sentence is already pronounced; and who, if the wind does but rush by his dungeon, imagines that it is the bow-string and the mute.'—'Fear not,' said Almorán, who now affected to be again calm; 'be still faithful, and thou shalt still be safe.'—'Alas!' said Osmyn, 'there is no diligence, no toil, no faith, that can secure the slave from the sudden phrensy of passion, from the causeless rage either of drunkenness or lust. I am that slave; the slave of a tyrant whom I hate.' The confusion of Almorán was now too great to be concealed, and he stood silent with rage, fear and indignation. Osmyn, supposing that his wonder made him doubt the truth of what he had heard, confirmed his declaration by an oath.

Whoever thou art, to whose mind Almorán, the mighty and the proud,

is present; before whom, the lord of absolute dominion stands trembling and rebuked; who seest the possessor of power by which nature is controuled, pale and silent with anguish and disappointment: if, in the fury of thy wrath, thou hast aggravated weakness into guilt; if thou hast chilled the glow of affection, when it flushed the cheek in thy presence, with the frown of displeasure, or repressed the ardour of friendship with indifference or neglect; now, let thy heart smite thee: for, in thy folly, thou hast cast away that gem, which is the light of life; which power can never seize, and which gold can never buy!

The tyrant fell at once from his pride, like a star from heaven; and Osmyn, still addressing him as Hamet, at once increased his misery and his fears: 'O,' said he, 'that the throne of Persia was thine! then should innocence enjoy her birth-right of peace, and hope should bid honest industry look upward. There is not one to whom Almorán has delegated power, nor one on whom his transient favour has bestowed any gift, who does not already feel his heart throb with the pangs of boding terror. Nor is there one who, if he did not fear the displeasure of the invisible power by whom the throne has been given to thy brother, would not immediately revolt to thee.'

Almorán, who had hitherto remained silent, now burst into a passionate exclamation of self-pity: 'What can I do?' said he; 'and whither can I turn?' Osmyn, who mistook the cause of his distress, and supposed that he deplored only his want of power to avail himself of the general disposition in his favour, endeavoured to fortify his mind against despair: 'Your state,' said he, 'indeed is distressful, but not hopeless.' The king, who, though addressed as Hamet, was still betrayed by his confusion to answer as Almorán, smote his breast, and replied in an agony, 'It is hopeless!' Osmyn remarked his emotion and despair, with a concern and astonishment that Almorán observed, and at once recollected his situation. He endeavoured to retract such expressions of trouble and despondency, as did not suit the character he had assumed; and telling Osmyn, that he thanked him for his friendship,

and would improve the advantages it offered him, he directed him to acquaint the eunuchs that they were to admit him to Almeida. When he was left alone, his doubts and perplexity held him long in suspense; a thousand expedients occurred to his mind by turns, and by turns were rejected.

His first thought was, to put Osmyn to death; but he considered, that by this he would gain no advantage, as he would be in equal danger from whoever should succeed him; he considered also, that against Osmyn he was upon his guard; and that he might at any time learn, from him, whatever design might be formed in favour of Hamet, by assuming Hamet's appearance: that he would thus be the confidant of every secret, in which his own safety was concerned; and might disconcert the best contrived project at the very moment of its execution, when it would be too late for other measures to be taken: he determined, therefore, to let Osmyn live; at least, till it became more necessary to cut him off. Having in some degree soothed and fortified his mind by these reflections, he entered the apartment of Almeida.

His hope was not founded upon a design to marry her under the appearance of Hamet; for that would be impossible, as the ceremony must have been performed by the priests who supposed the marriage with Hamet to have been forbidden by a divine command; and who, therefore, would not have consented, even supposing they would otherwise have ventured, at the request of Hamet, to perform a ceremony which they knew would be displeasing to Almorán: but he hoped to take advantage of her tenderness for his brother, and the particular circumstances of her situation, which made the solemnities of marriage impossible, to seduce her to gratify his desires, without the sanction which alone rendered the gratification of them lawful: if he succeeded in his design, he had reason to expect, either that his love would be extinguished by enjoyment; or that, if he should still desire to marry Almeida, he might, by disclosing to her the artifice by which he had effected his purpose, prevail upon her to consent, as her connection with Hamet, the chief obstacle to her marriage with him, would then be broken for ever; and as she

she might, perhaps, wish to sanctify the pleasure which she might be not unwilling to repeat, or at least to make that lawful which it would not be in her power to prevent.

In this disposition, and with this design, he was admitted to Almeida; who, without suspicion of her danger, was exposed to the severest trial, in which every passion concurred to oppose her virtue: she was solicited by all the powers of subtilty and desire, under the appearance of a lover whose tenderness and fidelity had been long tried, and whose passion she returned with equal constancy and ardour; and she was thus solicited, when the rites which alone could consecrate their union, were impossible, and were rendered impossible by the guilty designs of a rival, in whose power she was, and from whom no other expedient offered her a deliverance. Thus deceived and betrayed, she received him with an excess of tenderness and joy, which flattered all his hopes, and for a moment suspended his misery. She enquired with a fond and gentle solicitude, by what means he had gained admittance, and how he had provided for his retreat. He received and returned her caresses with vehemence, in which, to less partial eyes, desire would have been more apparent than love; and in the tumult of his passion, he almost neglected her enquiries: finding, however, that she would be answered, he told her, that being by the permission of Almorán admitted to every part of the palace, except that of the women, he had found means to bribe the eunuch who kept the door; who was not in danger of detection, because Almorán, wearied with the tumult and fatigue of the day, had retired to sleep, and given order to be called at a certain hour. She then complained of the solicitations to which she was exposed, expressed her dread of the consequences she had reason to expect from some sudden fall of the tyrant's rage, and related with tears the brutal outrage she had suffered when he last left her: 'Though I abhorred him,' said she, 'I yet kneeled before him for thee. Let me bend in reverence to that Power, at whose look the whirlwinds are silent, and the seas are calm, that his fury has hitherto been restrained from hurting thee.'

At these words, the face of Almorán was again covered with the blushes of confusion: to be still beloved only as Hamet, and as Almorán to be still hated; to be thus reproached without anger, and wounded by those who knew not that they struck him; was a species of misery peculiar to himself, and had been incurred only by the acquisition of new powers, which he had requested and received as necessary to obtain that felicity which the parsimony of nature had placed beyond his reach. His emotions, however, as by Almeida they were supposed to be the emotions of Hamet, she imputed to a different cause: 'As Heaven,' says she, 'has preserved thee from death; so has it, for thy sake, preserved me from violation.' Almorán, whose passion had in this interval again surmounted his remorse, gazed eagerly upon her, and catching her to his bosom; 'Let us at least,' says he, 'secure the happiness that is now offered; let not these inestimable moments pass by us unimproved; but to shew that we deserve them, let them be devoted to love.'—'Let us then,' said Almeida, 'escape together.'—'To escape with thee,' said Almorán, 'is impossible. I shall retire, and like the shaft of Arabia, leave no mark behind me; but the flight of Almeida will at once be traced to him by whom I was admitted, and I shall thus retaliate his friendship with destruction.'—'Let him then,' said Almeida, 'be the partner of our flight.'—'Urge it not now,' said Almorán; 'but trust to my prudence and my love, to select some hour that will be more favourable to our purpose. And yet,' said he, 'even then, we shall, as now, sigh in vain for the completion of our wishes: by whom shall our hands be joined, when in the opinion of the priests it has been forbidden from above?'—'Saye thyself then,' said Almeida, 'and leave me to my fate.'—'Not so,' said Almorán. 'What else,' replied Almeida, 'is in our power?'—'It is in our power,' said Almorán, 'to seize that joy, to which a public form can give us no new claim; for the public form can only declare that right by which I claim it now.'

As they were now reclining upon a sofa,

a sofa, he threw his arm round her; but she suddenly sprung up, and burst from him: the tear started to her eye, and she gazed upon him with an earnest but yet tender look: 'Is it?' said she; 'no, sure, it is not the voice of Hamet!'—'O yes,' said Almorán, 'what other voice should call thee to cancel at once the wrongs of Hamet and Almeida; to secure the treasures of thy love from the hand of the robber; to hide the joys, which if now we lose we may lose for ever, in the sacred and inviolable stores of the past, and place them beyond the power not of Almorán only but of fate?' With this wild effusion of desire, he caught her again to his breast, and finding no resistance, his heart exulted in his success; but the next moment, to the total disappointment of his hopes, he perceived that she had fainted in his arms. When she recovered, she once more disengaged herself from him, and turning away her face, she burst into tears. When her voice could be heard, she covered herself with her veil, and turning again towards him, 'All but this,' said she, 'I had learnt to bear; and how has this been deserved by Almeida of Hamet? You was my only solace in distress; and when the tears have stolen from my eyes in silence and in solitude, I thought on thee; I thought upon the chaste ardour of thy sacred friendship, which was softened, refined, and exalted into love! This was my hoarded treasure; and the thoughts of possessing this, soothed all my anguish with a miser's happiness; who, blest in the consciousness of hidden wealth, despises cold and hunger, and rejoices in the midst of all the miseries that make poverty dreadful: this was my last retreat; but I am now desolate and forlorn, and my soul looks round, with terror, for that refuge, which it can never find.'—'Find that refuge,' said Almorán, 'in me.'—'Alas!' said Almeida, 'can he afford me refuge from my sorrows, who, for the guilty pleasures of a transient moment, would for ever fully the purity of my mind, and aggravate misfortune by the consciousness of guilt!'

As Almorán now perceived, that it was impossible, by any importunity, to induce her to violate her principles;

he had nothing more to attempt, but to subvert them. 'When,' said he, 'shall Almeida awake, and these dreams of folly and superstition vanish? That only is virtue, by which happiness is produced; and whatever produces happiness, is therefore virtue; and the forms, and words, and rites, which priests have pretended to be required by Heaven, are the fraudulent arts only by which they govern mankind.'

Almeida, by this impious insult, was roused from grief to indignation; 'As thou hast now dared,' said she, 'to deride the laws, which thou wouldst first have broken; so hast thou broken for ever the tender bonds, by which my soul was united to thine. Such as I fondly believed thee, thou art not; and what thou art, I have never loved. I have loved a delusive phantom only, which, while I strove to grasp it, has vanished from me.' Almorán attempted to reply; but on such a subject, neither her virtue nor her wisdom would permit debate. 'That prodigy,' said she, 'which I thought was the slight of cunning, or the work of sorcery, I now revere as the voice of Heaven; which, as it knew thy heart, has in mercy saved me from thy arms. To the will of Heaven shall my will be obedient; and my voice also shall pronounce, "to Almorán Almeida."'

Almorán, whose whole soul was now suspended in attention, conceived new hopes of success; and foresaw the certain accomplishment of his purpose, though by an effect directly contrary to that which he had laboured to produce. Thus to have incurred the hatred of Almeida in the form of Hamet, was more fortunate than to have taken advantage of her love; the path that led to his wishes was now clear and open; and his marriage with Almeida in his own person, waited only till he could resume it. He, therefore, instead of soothing, provoked her resentment; 'If thou hast loved a phantom,' said he, 'which existed only in imagination; on such a phantom my love also has been fixed: thou hast, indeed, only the form of what I called Almeida; my love thou hast rejected, because thou hast never loved'

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‘ the object of thy passion was not Hamet, but a throne ; and thou hast made the observance of rituals, in which folly only can suppose there is good or ill, a pretence to violate thy faith, that thou mayest still gratify thy ambition !’

To this injurious reproach, Almeida made no reply ; and Almorán immediately quitted her apartment, that he might re-assume his own figure, and take advantage of the disposition which, under the appearance of Hamet, he had produced in favour of himself. But Osmyn, who supposing him to be Hamet, had intercepted and detained him as he was going to Almeida, now intercepted him a second time at his return, having placed himself near the door of the apartment for that purpose.

Osmyn was by no means satisfied with the issue of their last interview : he had perceived a perturbation in the mind of Almorán, for which, imagining him to be Hamet, he could not account ; and which seemed more extraordinary upon a review, than when it happened ; he therefore again entered into conversation with him, in which he farther disclosed his sentiments and designs. Almorán, notwithstanding the impatience natural to his temper and situation, was thus long detained listening to Osmyn, by the united influence of his curiosity and his fears : his enquiries still alarmed him with new terrors, by discovering new objects of distrust, and new instances of disaffection : still, however, he resolved, not yet to remove Osmyn from his post, that he might give no alarm by any appearance of suspicion, and consequently learn with more ease, and detect with more certainty, any project that might be formed against him.

CHAP. XVI.

ALMEIDA, as soon as she was left alone, began to review the scene that had just passed ; and was every moment affected with new wonder, grief, and resentment. She now deplored her own misfortune ; and now conceived a design to punish the author of it, from whose face she supposed the hand of adversity had torn the mask

under which he had deceived her : it appeared to her very easy, to take a severe revenge upon Hamet for the indignity which she supposed he had offered her, by complaining of it to Almorán ; and telling him, that he had gained admittance to her by bribing the eunuch who kept the door. The thought of thus giving him up, was one moment rejected, as arising from a vindictive spirit ; and the next indulged, as an act of justice to Almorán, and a punishment due to the hypocrisy of Hamet : it was rejected, when her grief, which was still mingled with a tender remembrance of the man she loved, was predominant ; and indulged, when her grief gave way to indignation.

Thus are we inclined to consider the same action, either as a virtue, or a vice, by the influence of different passions, which prompt us either to perform or to avoid it. Almeida, from deliberating whether she should accuse Hamet to Almorán, or conceal his fault, was led to consider what punishment he would either incur or escape in consequence of her determination ; and the images that rushed into her mind, the moment this became the object of her thoughts, at once determined her to be silent : ‘ Could I bear to see,’ said she, ‘ that hand which has so often trembled with delight when it unfolded mine, convulsed and black ! those eyes, that as often as they gazed upon me were dissolved in tears of tenderness and love, start from the sockets ! and those lips that breathed the softest sighs of elegant desire, distorted and gasping in the convulsions of death !’

From this image, her mind recoiled in an agony of terror and pity ; her heart sunk within her ; her limbs trembled ; she sunk down upon the sofa, and burst into tears.

By this time, Hamet, on whose form the likeness of Almorán was still impressed, had reached the palace. He went instantly towards the apartment of the women. Instead of that cheerful alacrity, that mixture of zeal and reverence and affection, which his eye had been used to find wherever it was turned, he now observed confusion, anxiety and terror ; whoever he met, made haste to prostrate themselves before him, and feared to look up till he

was past. He went on, however, with a hasty pace; and coming up to the eunuch's guard, he said, with an impatient tone, 'To Almeida!' The slave immediately made way before him, and conducted him to the door of the apartment, which he would not otherwise have been able to find, and for which he could not directly enquire.

When he entered, his countenance expressed all the passions that his situation had roused in his mind. He first looked sternly round him, to see whether Almorán was not present; and then fetching a deep sigh, he turned his eyes, with a look of mournful tenderness, upon Almeida. His first view was to discover, whether Almorán had already supplanted him; and for this purpose he collected the whole strength of his mind: he considered that he appeared now, not as Hamet, but as Almorán; and that he was to question Almeida concerning Almorán, while she had mistaken him for Hamet; he was therefore to maintain the character, at whatever expence, till his doubts were resolved, and his fears either removed or confirmed. He was so firmly persuaded, that Almorán had been there before him, that he did not ask the question; but supposed the fact: he restrained alike both his tenderness and his fears; and looking earnestly upon Almeida, who had risen up in his presence with blushes and confusion, 'To me,' says he, 'is Almeida still cold? and has she lavished all her love upon Hamet?'

At the name of Hamet, the blushes and confusion of Almeida increased: her mind was still full of the images, which had risen from the thought of what Hamet might suffer, if Almorán should know that he had been with her; and, though she feared that their interview was discovered, yet she hoped it might be only suspected, and in that case the removal or confirmation of the suspicions, on which the fate of Hamet depended, would devolve upon her.

In this situation, she, who had but a few moments before doubted, whether she should not voluntarily give him up, when nothing more was necessary for his safety than to be silent; now determined, with whatever reluctance, to secure him, though it could not be done without dissimulation, and though it was probable that in this dissimulation

she would be detected. Instead, therefore, of answering the question, she repeated it: 'On whom,' said she, 'my lord? on Hamet?' Hamet, whose suspicions were increased by the evasion, replied with great emotion, 'Aye, on Hamet: did he not this moment leave you?'—'Leave me this moment?' said Almeida, with yet greater confusion, and deeper blushes. Hamet, in the impatience of his jealousy, concluded, that the passions which he saw expressed in her countenance, and which arose from the struggle between her regard to truth, and her tenderness for Hamet, proceeded from the consciousness of what he had most reason to dread, and she to conceal—a breach of virtue, to which she had been betrayed by his own appearance united with the vices of his brother: he, therefore, drew back from her, with a look of inexpressible anguish, and stood some time silent. She observed, that in his countenance there was more expression of trouble, than rage; she, therefore, hoped to divert him from pursuing his enquiries, by at once removing his jealousy; which she supposed, would be at an end, as soon as she should disclose the resolution she had taken in his favour. Addressing him, therefore, as Almorán, with a voice, which though it was gentle and soothing, was yet mournful and tremulous; 'Do not turn from me,' said she, 'with those unfriendly and frowning looks; give me now that love which so lately you offered, and with all the future I will atone the past.'

Upon Hamet, whose heart involuntarily answered to the voice of Almeida, these words had irresistible and instantaneous force; but recollecting, in a moment, whose form he bore, and to whom they were addressed, they struck him with new astonishment, and increased the torments of his mind. Supposing what he at first feared had happened, and that Almorán had seduced her as Hamet; he could not account for her now addressing him, as Almorán, with words of favour and compliance: he, therefore, renewed his enquiries concerning himself, with apprehensions of a different kind. She, who was still solicitous to put an end to the enquiry, as well for the sake of Hamet, as to prevent her own embarrassment, replied with a sigh, 'Let not

' thy

thy peace be interrupted by one thought of Hamet; for of Hamet Almeida shall think no more.' Hamet, who, though he had fortified himself against whatever might have happened to her person, could not bear the alienation of her mind, cried out, with looks of distraction and a voice scarcely human, 'Not think of Hamet!' Almeida, whose astonishment was every moment increasing, replied, with a tender and interesting enquiry, 'Is Almorán then offended, that Almeida should think of Hamet no more?' Hamet being thus addressed by the name of his brother, again recollected his situation; and now first conceived the idea, that the alteration of Almeida's sentiments with respect to himself, might be the effect of some violence offered her by Almorán in his likeness; he, therefore, recurred to his first purpose, and determined, by a direct enquiry, to discover, whether she had seen him under that appearance. This enquiry he urged with the utmost solemnity and ardour, in terms suitable to his present appearance and situation: 'Tell me,' said he; 'have these doors been open to Hamet?' 'Has he obtained possession of that treasure, which, by the voice of Heaven, has been allotted to me?'

To this double question, Almeida answered by a single negative; and her answer, therefore, was both false and true: it was true, that her person was still inviolate, and it was true also, that Hamet had not been admitted to her; yet her denial of it was false, for she believed the contrary; Almorán only had been admitted, but she had received him as his brother. Hamet, however, was satisfied with the answer, and did not discover its fallacy. He looked up to Heaven, with an expression of gratitude and joy; and then turning to Almeida, 'Swear then,' said he, 'that thou hast granted to Hamet, no pledge of thy love which should be reserved for me.' Almeida, who now thought nothing more than the asseveration necessary to quiet his mind, immediately complied: 'I swear,' said she, 'that to Hamet I have given nothing, which thou wouldst wish me to withhold: the power that has devoted my person to thee, has disunited my heart from

Hamet, whom I renounce in thy preference for ever.'

Hamet, whose fortitude and recollection were again overborne, was thrown into an agitation of mind, which discovered itself by looks and gestures very different from those which Almeida had expected, and overwhelmed her with new confusion and disappointment: that he, who had so lately solicited her love with all the vehemence of a desire impatient to be gratified, should now receive a declaration that she was ready to comply, with marks of distress and anger, was a mystery which she could not solve. In the mean time, the struggle in his breast became every moment more violent: 'Where then,' said he, 'is the constancy which you vowed to Hamet? and for what instance of his love is he now forsaken?'

Almeida was now more embarrassed than before: she felt all the force of the reproof, supposing it to have been given by Almorán; and she could be justified only by relating the particular, which at the expence of her sincerity she had determined to conceal. Almorán was now exalted in her opinion, while his form was animated by the spirit of Hamet; as much as Hamet had been degraded, while his form was animated by the spirit of Almorán. In his resentment of her perfidy to his rival, though it favoured his fondest and most ardent wishes, there was an abhorrence of vice, and a generosity of mind, which she supposed to have been incompatible with his character. To his reproach, she could reply only by complaint; and could no otherwise evade his question, than by observing the inconsistency of his own behaviour. 'Your words,' said she, 'are daggers to my heart. You condemn me for a compliance with your own wishes; and for obedience to that voice, which you supposed to have revealed the will of Heaven. Has the caprice of desire already wandered to a new object? and do you now seek a pretence to refuse, when it is freely offered, what so lately you would have taken by force?'

Hamet, who was now fired with resentment against Almeida, whom yet he could not behold without desire; and who, at the same moment, was

impatient to revenge his wrongs upon Almorán; was suddenly prompted to satisfy all his passions, by taking advantage of the wiles of Almorán, and the perfidy of Almeida, to defeat the one, and to punish the other. It was now in his power instantly to consummate his marriage, as a priest might be procured without a moment's delay, and as Almeida's consent was already given; he would then obtain the possession of her person, by the very act in which she perfidiously resigned it to his rival; to whom he would then leave the beauties he had already possessed, and cast from him in disdain, as united with a mind that he could never love. As his imagination was fired with the first conception of this design, he caught her to his breast with a fury, in which all the passions in all their rage were at once concentrated: 'Let the priest,' said he, 'instantly unite us. Let us comprize, in one moment, in this instant, now, our whole of being, and exclude alike the future and the past!' Then grasping her still in his arms, he looked up to heaven: 'Ye powers,' said he, 'invisible but yet present, who mould my changing and unresisting form; prolong, but for one hour, that mysterious charm, that is now upon me, and I will be ever after subservient to your will!'

Almeida, who was terrified at the furious ardour of this unintelligible address, shrunk from his embrace, pale and trembling, without power to reply. Hamet gazed tenderly upon her; and recollecting the purity and tenderness with which he had loved her, his virtues suddenly recovered their force; he dismissed her from his embrace; and turning from her, he dropped in silence the tear that started to his eye, and expressed, in a low and faltering voice, the thoughts that rushed upon his mind: 'No,' said he, 'Hamet shall still disdain the joy, which is at once sordid and transient: in the breast of Hamet, lust shall not be the pander of revenge! Shall I, who have languished for the pure delight which can arise only from the interchange of soul with soul, and is endeared by mutual confidence and complacency; shall I snatch under this disguise, which belyes my features and degrades my virtue, a casual posses-

sion of faithless beauty, which I despise and hate? Let this be the portion of those that hate me without a cause; but let this be far from me!' At this thought, he felt a sudden elevation of mind: and the conscious dignity of virtue, that in such a conflict was victorious, rendered him, in this glorious moment, superior to misfortune: his gesture became calm, and his countenance sedate; he considered the wrongs he suffered, not as a sufferer, but as a judge; and he determined at once to discover himself to Almeida, and to reproach her with her crime. He remarked her confusion without pity, as the effect not of grief but of guilt; and, fixing his eyes upon her, with the calm severity of a superior and offended being, 'Such,' said he, 'is the benevolence of the Almighty to the children of the dust, that our misfortunes are, like poisons, antiques to each other.'

Almeida stood fixed in wonder and expectation, and looked earnestly at him, but continued silent. 'Thy looks,' said Hamet, 'are full of wonder; but as yet thy wonder has no cause, in comparison of that which shall be revealed. Thou knowest the prodigy, which so lately parted Hamet and Almeida: I am that Hamet, thou art that Almeida.' Almeida would now have interrupted him; but Hamet raised his voice, and demanded to be heard: 'At that moment,' said he, 'wretched as I am, the child of error and disobedience, my heart repined in secret at the destiny which had been written upon my head; for I then thought thee faithful and constant: but if our hands had been then united, I should have been more wretched than I am; for I now know that thou art fickle and false. To know thee, though it has pierced my soul with sorrow, has yet healed the wound which was inflicted when I lost thee; and though I am now compelled to wear the form of Almorán, whose vices are this moment disgracing mine, yet in the balance I shall be weighed as Hamet; and I shall suffer only as I am found wanting.'

Almeida, whose mind was now in a tumult that bordered upon distraction, bewildered in a labyrinth of doubt and wonder, and alike dreading the consequence

quence of what she heard, whether it was false or true, was yet impatient to confute or confirm it; and as soon as she had recovered her speech, urged him for some token of the prodigy he asserted, which he might easily have given, by relating any of the incidents which themselves only could know. But just at this moment, Almorán, having at last disengaged himself from Osmyñ, by whom he had been long detained, resumed his own figure: and while the eyes of Almeida were fixed upon Hamet, his powers were suddenly taken from him, and restored in an instant; and she beheld the features of Almorán vanish, and gazed with astonishment upon his own: 'Thy features change!' said she, 'and thou indeed art Hamet.'—'The sudden trance,' said he, 'has restored me to myself; and from my wrongs where shalt thou be hidden?' This reproach was more than she could sustain; but he caught her as she was falling, and supported her in his arms. This incident renewed in a moment all the tenderness of his love: while he beheld her distress, and pressed her by the embrace that sustained her to his bosom, he forgot every injury which he supposed she had done him; and perceived her recover with a pleasure, that for a moment obliterated the sense of his misfortunes.

Her first reflection was, upon the snare in which she had been taken; and her first sensation was, joy that she had escaped: she saw at once the whole complication of events that had deceived and distressed her; and nothing more was now necessary, than to explain them to Hamet; which, however, she could not do, without discovering the insincerity of her answers to the enquiries which he had made, while she mistook him for his brother. 'If in my heart,' says she, 'thou hast found any virtue, let it incline thee to pity the vice that is mingled with it: by the vice I have been ensnared, but I have been delivered by the virtue. Almorán, for now I know that it was not thee, Almorán, when he possessed thy form, was with me: he profaned thy love, by attempts to supplant my virtue; I resisted his importunity, and escaped perdition; but the guilt of Almorán drew my resentment upon Hamet. I thought

'the vices which, under thy form, I discovered in his bosom, were thine; and, in the anguish of grief, indignation, and disappointment, my heart renounced thee: yet, as I could not give thee up to death, I could not discover to Almorán the attempt which I imputed to thee; when you questioned me, therefore, as Almorán, I was betrayed to dissimulation, by the tenderness which still melted my heart for Hamet.'—'I believe thee,' said Hamet, catching her in a transport to his breast: 'I love thee for thy virtue; and may the pure and exalted beings, who are superior to the passions that now throb in my heart, forgive me, if I love thee also for thy fault! Yet, let the danger to which it betrayed thee, teach us still to walk in the straight path, and commit the keeping of our peace to the Almighty: for he that wanders in the maze of falsehood, shall pass by the good that he would meet, and shall meet the evil that he would shun. I also was tempted; but I was strengthened to resist: if I had used the power, which I derived from the arts that have been practised against me, to return evil for evil; if I had not disdained a secret and unavowed revenge, and the unhallowed pleasures of a brutal appetite; I might have possessed thee in the form of Almorán, and have wronged irreparably myself and thee: for how could I have been admitted, as Hamet, to the beauties which I enjoyed as Almorán? and how couldst thou have given to Almorán, what in reality had been appropriated by Hamet?'

CHAP. XVII.

BUT while Almeida and Hamet were thus congratulating each other upon the evils which they had escaped, they were threatened by others, which, however obvious, they had overlooked.

Almorán, who was now exulting in the prospect of success that had exceeded his hopes, and who supposed the possession of Almeida before the end of the next hour was as certain as that the next hour would arrive, suddenly entered the apartment; but upon discovering Hamet,

Hamet, he started back astonished and disappointed. Hamet stood unmoved; and regarded him with a fixed and steady look, that at once reproached and confounded him. 'What treachery,' said Almorán, 'has been practised against me? What has brought thee to this place? and how hast thou gained admittance?'—'Against thy peace,' said Hamet, 'no treachery has been practised, but by thyself. By those arts in which thy vices have employed the powers of darkness, I have been brought hither; and by those arts I have gained admittance: thy form which they have imposed upon me, was my passport; and by the restoration of my own, I have detected and disappointed the fraud, which the double change was produced to execute. Almeida, whom, as Hamet, thou couldst teach to hate thee, it is now impossible that, as Almorán, thou shouldst teach to love.'

Almeida, who perceived the storm to be gathering which the next moment would burst upon the head of Hamet, interposed between them, and addressed each of them by turns; urging Hamet to be silent, and conjuring Almorán to be merciful. Almorán, however, without regarding Almeida, or making any reply to Hamet, struck the ground with his foot, and the messengers of death, to whom the signal was familiar, appeared at the door. Almorán then commanded them to seize his brother, with a countenance pale and livid, and a voice that was broken by rage. Hamet was still unmoved; but Almeida threw herself at the feet of Almorán, and, embracing his knees, was about to speak, but he broke from her with sudden fury: 'If the world should sue,' said he, 'I would spurn it off. There is no pang that cunning can invent, which he shall not suffer; and when death at length shall disappoint my vengeance, his mangled limbs shall be cast out unburied, to feed the beasts of the desert and the fowls of heaven.' During this menace, Almeida sunk down without signs of life; and Hamet struggling in vain for liberty to raise her from the ground, she was carried off by some women who were called to her assistance.

In this awful crisis, Hamet, who felt his own fortitude give way, looked

up; and though he conceived no words, a prayer ascended from his heart to heaven, and was accepted by Him, to whom our thoughts are known while they are yet afar off. For Hamet, the fountain of strength was opened from above; his eyes sparkled with confidence, and his breast was dilated by hope. He commanded the guard that were leading him away to stop; and they implicitly obeyed: he then stretched out his hand towards Almorán, whose spirit was rebuked before him; 'Hear me,' said he, 'thou tyrant! for it is thy genius that speaks by my voice. What has been the fruit of all thy guilt, but accumulated misery? What joy hast thou derived from undivided empire? what joy from the prohibition of my marriage with Almeida? what good from that power, which some evil daemon has added to thy own? what, at this moment, is thy portion, but rage and anguish, disappointment and despair? Even I, whom thou seest the captive of thy power, whom thou hast wronged of empire, and yet more of love; even I am happy, in comparison of thee. I know that my sufferings, however multiplied, are short; for they shall end with life, and no life is long: then shall the everlasting ages commence; and through everlasting ages thy sufferings shall increase. The moment is now near, when thou shalt tread that line which alone is the path to heaven, the narrow path that is stretched over the pit, which smokes for ever, and for ever! When thine aching eye shall look forward to the end that is far distant, and when behind thou shalt find no retreat; when thy steps shall falter, and thou shalt tremble at the depth beneath, which thought itself is not able to fathom; then shall the angel of distribution lift his inexorable hand against thee: from the irremediable way shall thy feet be smitten; thou shalt plunge in the burning flood; and though thou shalt live for ever, thou shalt rise no more!'

As the words of Hamet struck Almorán with terror, and over-awed him by an influence which he could not surmount; Hamet was forced from his presence, before any other orders had been given about him, than were im-

plied

plied in the menace that was addressed to Almeida: no violence, therefore, was yet offered him; but he was secured, till the king's pleasure should be known, in a dungeon not far from the palace, to which he was conducted by a subterraneous passage; and the door being closed upon him, he was left in silence, darkness, and solitude, such as may be imagined before the voice of the Almighty produced light and life.

When Almorán was sufficiently recollected to consider his situation, he despaired of prevailing upon Almeida to gratify his wishes, till her attachment to Hamet was irreparably broken; and he, therefore, resolved to put him to death. With this view, he repeated the signal, which convened the ministers of death to his presence; but the sound was lost in a peal of thunder that instantly followed it, and the Genius, from whom he received the talisman, again stood before him.

'Almorán,' said the Genius, 'I am now compelled into thy presence by the command of a superior Power; whom, if I should dare to disobey, the energy of his will might drive me, in a moment, beyond the limits of nature and the reach of thought, to spend eternity alone, without comfort, and without hope.'—'And what,' said Almorán, 'is the will of this mighty and tremendous Being?'—'His will,' said the Genius, 'I will reveal to thee. Hitherto, thou hast been enabled to lift the rod of adversity against thy brother, by powers which Nature has not entrusted to man: as these powers, and these only, have put him into thy hand, thou art forbidden to lift it against his life; if thou hadst prevailed against him by thy own power, thy own power would not have been restrained: to afflict him, thou art still free; but thou art not permitted to destroy. At the moment in which thou shalt conceive a thought to cut him off by violence, the punishment of thy disobedience shall commence, and the pangs of death shall be upon thee.'—'If then,' said Almorán, 'this awful Power is the friend of Hamet; what yet remains, in the stores of thy wisdom, for me? Till he dies, I am at once precluded from peace, and safety, and enjoyment.'—'Look up,' said the Genius, 'for the iron

hand of despair is not yet upon thee. Thou canst be happy only by his death; and his life thou art forbidden to take away: yet mayest thou still arm him against himself; and if he dies by his own hand, thy wishes will be full.'—'O name,' said Almorán, 'but the means, and it shall this moment be accomplished!'—'Se-
'left,' said the Genius, 'some friend—'

At the name of friend, Almorán started, and looked round in despair. He recollected the perfidy of Osmyr; and he suspected that, from the same cause, all were perfidious: 'While Hamet yet has life,' said he, 'I fear the face of man, as of a savage that is prowling for his prey.'—'Relinquish not yet thy hopes,' said the Genius; 'for one, in whom thou wilt joyfully confide, may be found. Let him secretly obtain admittance to Hamet, as if by stealth; let him profess an abhorrence of thy reign, and compassion for his misfortunes; let him pretend that the rack is even now preparing for him; that death is inevitable, but that torment may be avoided: let him then give him a poignard, as the instrument of deliverance; and, perhaps, his own hand may strike the blow, that shall give thee peace.'—'But who,' said Almorán, 'shall go upon this important errand?'—'Who,' replied the Genius, 'but thyself? Hast thou not the power to assume the form of whomsoever thou wouldst have sent?'—'I would have sent Osmyr,' said Almorán, 'but that I know him to be a traitor.'—'Let the form of Osmyr then,' said the Genius, 'be thine. The shadows of the evening have now stretched themselves upon the earth: command Osmyr, to attend thee alone in the grove, where Solyman, thy father, was used to meditate by night; and when thy form shall be impressed upon him, I will there seal his eyes in sleep, till the charm shall be broken; so shall no evil be attempted against thee, and the transformation shall be known only to thyself.'

Almorán, whose breast was again illuminated by hope, was about to express his gratitude and joy; but the Genius suddenly disappeared. He began, therefore, immediately to follow the instructions that he had received: he

he commanded Osmyn to attend him in the grove, and forbade every other to approach; by the power of the talisman he assumed his appearance, and saw him sink down in the supernatural slumber before him: he then quitted the place, and prepared to visit Hamet in the prison.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE officer who commanded the guard that kept the gate of the prison, was Caled. He was now next in trust and power to Osmyn; but as he had proposed a revolt to Hamet, in which Osmyn had refused to concur, he knew that his life was now in his power; he dreaded lest, for some slight offence, or in some fit of causeless displeasure, he should disclose the secret to Almorán, who would then certainly condemn him to death. To secure this fatal secret, and put an end to his inquietude, he resolved, from the moment that Almorán was established upon the throne, to find some opportunity secretly to destroy Osmyn: in this resolution, he was confirmed by the enmity which inferior minds never fail to conceive against that merit which they cannot but envy without spirit to emulate, and by which they feel themselves disgraced without an effort to acquire equal honour; it was confirmed, also, by the hope which Caled had conceived, that, upon the death of Osmyn, he should succeed to his post: his apprehensions, likewise, were increased by the gloom which he remarked in the countenance of Osmyn; and which, not knowing that it arose from fear, he imputed to jealousy and malevolence.

When Almorán, who had now assumed the appearance of Osmyn, had passed the subterranean avenue to the dungeon in which Hamet was confined, he was met by Caled; of whom he demanded admittance to the prince, and produced his own signet, as a testimony that he came with the authority of the king. As it was Caled's interest to secure the favour of Osmyn, till an opportunity should offer to cut him off, he received him with every possible mark of respect and reverence; and when he was gone into the dungeon, he commanded a beverage to be pre-

pared for him against he should return, in which such spices were infused, as might expel the malignity which, in that place, might be received with the breath of life; and taking himself the key of the prison, he waited at the door.

When Almorán entered the dungeon, with a lamp which he had received from Caled, he found Hamet sitting upon the ground: his countenance was impressed with the characters of grief; but it retained no marks either of anger or fear. When he looked up, and saw the features of Osmyn, he judged that the mutes were behind him, and, therefore, rose up, to prepare himself for death. Almorán beheld his calmness and fortitude with the involuntary praise of admiration; yet persisted in his purpose without remorse. 'I am come,' said he, 'by the command of Almorán, to denounce that fate, the bitterness of which I will enable thee to avoid.'—'And what is there,' said Hamet, 'in my fortunes, that has prompted thee to the danger of this attempt?'—'The utmost that I can give thee,' said Almorán, 'I can give thee without danger to myself: but though I have been placed, by the hand of fortune, near the person of the tyrant, yet has my heart in secret been thy friend. If I am the messenger of evil, impute it to him only by whom it is devised. The rack is now preparing to receive thee; and every art of ingenious cruelty will be exhausted to protract and to increase the agonies of death.'—'And what,' said Hamet, 'can thy friendship offer me?'—'I can offer thee,' said Almorán, 'that which will at once dismiss thee to those regions, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary rest for ever.' He then produced the poignard from his bosom; and presenting it to Hamet, 'Take this,' said he, 'and sleep in peace.'

Hamet, whose heart was touched with sudden joy at the sight of so unexpected a remedy for every evil, did not immediately reflect, that he was not at liberty to apply it: he snatched it in a transport from the hand of Almorán, and expressed his sense of the obligation by clasping him in his arms, and shedding the tears of gratitude in his breast.

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Caled, who waited at the door till the supposed Osmyn should return, presented him with the beverage which he had prepared, of which he recounted the virtues; and Almorán received it with pleasure, and having eagerly drunk it off, returned to the palace. As soon as he was alone, he resumed his own figure, and sat, with a confident and impatient expectation, that in a short time a messenger would be dispatched to acquaint him with the death of Hamet. Hamet, in the meantime, having grasped the dagger in his hand, and raised his arm for the blow, "This," said he, "is my passport to the realms of peace, the immediate and only object of my hope." But at these words, his mind instantly took the alarm. "Let me reflect," said he, "a moment: from what can I derive hope in death?—from that patient and persevering virtue, and from that alone, by which we fulfil the task that is assigned us upon the earth. Is it not our duty to suffer, as well as to act? If my own hand consigns me to the grave, what can it do but perpetuate that misery, which, by disobedience, I would shun? what can it do, but cut off my life and hope together?" With this reflection he threw the dagger from him; and stretching himself again upon the ground, resigned himself to the disposal of the Father of man, most Merciful and Almighty.

Almorán, who had now resolved to send for the intelligence which he longed to hear, was dispatching a messenger to the prison, when he was told that Caled desired admittance to his presence. At the name of Caled, he started up in an ecstasy of joy; and not doubting but that Hamet was dead, he ordered him to be instantly admitted. When he came in, Almorán made no enquiry about Hamet, because he would not appear to expect the event,

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which would render his services most important; he took a ring from his own finger, and putting it upon that of Caled, 'Take this,' said he, 'as a pledge, that to-morrow Osmyn shall lose his head; and that, from this moment, thou art invested with his power.'

Caled having, in the conversation between Almorán and Hamet, discerned indubitable treachery, which he imputed to Osmyn whose appearance Almorán had then assumed, eagerly seized the opportunity to destroy him; he, therefore, not trusting to the event of his accusation, had mingled poison in the bowl which he presented to Almorán when he came out from Hamet: this, however, at first he had resolved to conceal.

In consequence of this accusation, he supposed Osmyn would be questioned upon the rack; he supposed also, that the accusation, as it was true, would be confirmed by his confession; that whatever he should then say to the prejudice of his accuser, would be disbelieved; and that when after a few hours the poison should take effect, no inquisition would be made into the death of a criminal, whom the bow-string or the scimitar would otherwise have been employed to destroy. But he now hoped to derive new merit from an act of zeal, which Almorán had approved before it was known, by condemning his rival to die, whose death he had already insured. 'May the wishes of my lord,' said he, 'be always anticipated; and may it be found, that whatever he ordains is already done: may he accept the zeal of his servant, whom he has lighted to honour; for, before the light of the morning shall return, the eyes of Osmyn shall close in everlasting darkness.'

At these words, the countenance of Almorán changed; his cheeks became pale, and his lips trembled: 'What then,' said he, 'hast thou done?' Caled, who was terrified and astonished, threw himself upon the ground, and was unable to reply. Almorán, who now, by the utmost effort of his mind, restrained his confusion and his fear, that he might learn the truth from Caled without dissimulation or disguise, raised him from the ground, and repeated his enquiry. 'If I have

erred,' said Caled, 'impute it not: when I had detected the treachery of Osmyn, I was transported by my zeal for thee. For proof that he is guilty, I appeal now to himself; for he yet lives: but that he might not escape the hand of justice, I mingled, in the bowl I gave him, the drugs of death.'

At these words, Almorán, striking his hands together, looked upward in an agony of despair and horror, and fell back upon a sofa that was behind him. Caled, whose astonishment was equal to his disappointment and his fears, approached him with a trembling though hasty pace; but as he stooped to support him, Almorán suddenly drew his dagger, and stabbed him to the heart; and repeated the blow with reproaches and execrations, till his strength failed him.

In this dreadful moment, the Genius once more appeared before him; at the sight of whom he waved his hand, but was unable to speak. 'Nothing,' said the Genius, 'that has happened to Almorán, is hidden from me. Thy peace has been destroyed alike by the defection of Osmyn, and by the zeal of Caled: thy life may yet be preserved; but it can be preserved only by a charm, which Hamet must apply.' Almorán, who had raised his eyes, and conceived some languid hope, when he heard that he might yet live; cast them again down in despair, when he heard that he could receive life only from Hamet. 'From Hamet,' said he, 'I have already taken the power to save me; I have, by thy counsel, given him the instrument of death, which by thy counsel also, I urged him to use: he received it with joy, and he is now doubtless numbered with the dead.'

'Hamet,' said the Genius, 'is not dead; but from the Fountain of Virtue he drinks life and peace. If what I shall propose, he refuses to perform, not all the powers of earth, and sea, and air, if they should combine, can give thee life: but if he complies, the death, that is now suspended over thee, shall fall upon his head; and thy life shall be again delivered to the hand of time.'

'Make haste then,' said Almorán, 'and I will here wait the event.'

'The event,' said the Genius, 'is not distant;



distant; and it is the last experiment which my power can make, either upon him or thee: when the star of the night, that is now near the horizon, shall set, I will be with him.

When Almorán was alone, he reflected, that every act of supernatural power which the Genius had enabled him to perform, had brought upon him some new calamity, though it always promised him some new advantage. As he would not impute this disappointment to the purposes for which he employed the power that he had received, he indulged a suspicion, that it proceeded from the perfidy of the Being by whom it was bestowed; in his mind; therefore, he thus reasoned with himself: 'The Genius, who has pretended to be the friend of Almorán, has been secretly in confederacy with Hamet: why else do I yet sigh in vain for Almeida? and why else did not Hamet perish, when his life was in my power? By his counsel, I persuaded Hamet to destroy himself; and, in the very act, I was betrayed to drink the potion, by which I shall be destroyed: I have been led on, from misery to misery, by ineffectual expedients, and fallacious hopes. In this crisis of my fate, I will not trust, with implicit confidence, in another: I will be present at the interview of this powerful, but suspected Being, with Hamet; and who can tell, but that if I detect a fraud, I may be able to disappoint it: however powerful, he is not omniscient; I may, therefore, be present, unknown and unsuspected even by him, in a form that I can chuse by a thought, to which he cannot be conscious.'

CHAP. XIX.

IN consequence of this resolution, Almorán, having commanded one of the soldiers of the guard that attended upon Hamet into an inner room of the palace, he ordered him to wait there till his return: then making fast the door, he assumed his figure, and went immediately to the dungeon; where producing his signet, he said, he had received orders from the king to remain with the prisoner, till the watch expired.

As he entered without speaking, and without a light, Hamet continued

stretched upon the ground, with his face towards the earth; and Almorán, having silently retired to a remote corner of the place, waited for the appearance of the Genius.

The dawn of the morning now broke; and, in a few minutes, the prison shook, and the Genius appeared. He was visible by a lambent light that played around him; and Hamet, starting from the ground, turned to the vision with reverence and wonder: but as the Omnipotent was ever present to his mind, to whom all beings in all worlds are obedient, and on whom alone he relied for protection, he was neither confused nor afraid. 'Hamet!' said the Genius, 'the crisis of thy fate is near.'—'Who art thou?' said Hamet; 'and for what purpose art thou come?'—'I am,' replied the Genius, 'an inhabitant of the world above thee; and to the will of thy brother, my powers have been obedient: upon him they have not conferred happiness, but they have brought evil upon thee. It was my voice, that forbade thy marriage with Almeida; and my voice, that decreed the throne to Almorán: I gave him the power to assume thy form; and, by me, the hand of oppression is now heavy upon thee. Yet I have not decreed, that he should be happy, nor that thou shouldst be wretched: darkness as yet rests upon my purpose; but my heart in secret is thy friend.'—'If thou art indeed my friend,' said Hamet, 'deliver me from this prison; and preserve Hamet for Almeida.'—'Thy deliverance,' said the Genius, 'must depend upon thyself. There is a charm, of which the power is great; but it is by thy will only, that this power can be exerted.'

The Genius then held out towards him a scroll, on which the seal of seven powers was impressed. 'Take,' said he, 'this scroll, in which the mysterious name of Orosmades is written. Invoke the spirits that reside westward from the rising of the sun; and northward, in the regions of cold and darkness: then stretch out thy hand, and a lamp of sulphur, self-kindled, shall burn before thee. In the fire of this lamp, consume that which I now give thee; and as the smoke, into which it changes,

' shall mix with the air, a mighty charm shall be formed, which shall defend thee from all mischief: from that instant, no poison, however potent, can hurt thee; nor shall any prison confine: in one moment, thou shalt be restored to the throne, and to Almeida; and the angel of death shall lay his hand upon thy brother; to whom, if I had confided this last best effort of my power, he would have secured the good to himself, and have transferred the evil to thee.'

Almorán, who in a borrowed form had listened to this address of the Genius to Hamet, was now confirmed in his suspicions, that evil had been ultimately intended against him; and that he had been entangled in the toils of perfidy, while he believed himself to be assisted by the efforts of friendship: he was also convinced, that by the Genius he was not known to be present. Hamet, however, stood still doubtful, and Almorán was kept silent by his fears. 'Whoever thou art,' said Hamet, 'the condition of the advantages which thou hast offered me, is such as it is not lawful to fulfil: these horrid rites, and this commerce with unholy powers, are prohibited to mortals in the law of life.'—'See thou to that,' said the Genius; 'good and evil are before thee; that which I now offer thee, I will offer no more.'

Hamet, who had not fortitude to give up at once the possibility of securing the advantages that had been offered, and who was seduced by human frailty to deliberate at least upon the choice; stretched out his hand, and receiving the scroll, the Genius instantly disappeared. That which had been proposed as a trial of his virtue, Almorán believed indeed to be an offer of advantage; he had no hope, therefore, but that Hamet would refuse the conditions, and that he should be able to obtain the talisman, and fulfil them himself: he judged that the mind of Hamet was in suspense, and was doubtful to which side it might finally incline; he, therefore, instantly assumed the voice and the person of Omar, that by the influence of his counsel he might be able to turn the scale.

When the change was effected, he

called Hamet by his name; and Hamet, who knew the voice, answered him in a transport of joy and wonder: 'My friend,' said he, 'my father! in this dreary solitude, in this hour of trial, thou art welcome to my soul as liberty and life! Guide me to thee by thy voice; and tell me, while I hold thee to my bosom, how and wherefore thou art come!'—'Do not now ask me,' said Almorán: 'it is enough that I am here, and that I am permitted to warn thee of the precipice on which thou standest. It is enough, that I have overheard the specious guile, which some evil being has practised upon thee.'—'Is it then certain,' said Hamet, 'that this being is evil?'—'Is not that being evil,' said Almorán, 'who proposes evil, as the condition of good?'—'Shall I then,' said Hamet, 'renounce my liberty and life? The rack is now ready; and, perhaps, the next moment, it's tortures will be inevitable!'—'Let me ask thee then,' said Almorán, 'to preserve thy life, wilt thou destroy thy soul?'—'O! stay,' said Hamet; 'Let me not be tried too far! Let the strength of Him who is Almighty, be manifested in my weakness!' Hamet then paused a few moments; but he was no longer in doubt: and Almorán, who disbelieved and despised the arguments by which he intended to persuade him to renounce what, upon the same condition, he was impatient to secure for himself, conceived hopes that he should succeed; and those hopes were instantly confirmed.—'Take, then,' said Hamet, 'this unholy charm; and remove it far from me, as the sands of Alai from the trees of Oman; lest, in some dreadful moment, my virtue may fail me, and thy counsel may be wanting!'—'Give it me then,' said Almorán; and feeling for the hands of each other, he snatched it from him in an extasy of joy, and instantly resuming his own voice and figure, he cried out, 'At length I have preysailed! and life and love, dominion and revenge, are now at once in my hand!'

Hamet heard and knew the voice of his brother, with astonishment; but it was too late to wish that he had withheld the charm, which his virtue would not permit him to use.

Yet a few moments

'moments pass,' said Almorán, 'and thou art nothing.' Hamet, who doubted not of the power of the talisman, and knew that Almorán had no principles which would restrain him from using it to his destruction, resigned himself to death, with a sacred joy that he had escaped from guilt. Almorán then, with an elation of mind that sparkled in his eyes, and glowed upon his cheek, stretched out his hand, in which he held the scroll; and a lamp of burning sulphur was immediately suspended in the air before him: he held the mysterious writing in the flame; and as it began to burn, the place shook with reiterated thunder, of which every peal was more terrible and more loud. Hamet, wrapping his robe round him, cried out, 'In the Fountain of Life that flows for ever, let my life be mingled! Let me not be, as if I had never been; but still conscious of my being, let me still glorify Him from whom it is derived, and be still happy in His love!'

Almorán who was absorbed in the anticipation of his own felicity, heard the thunder without dread, as the proclamation of his triumph: 'Let thy hopes,' said he, 'be thy portion; and the pleasures that I have secured, shall be mine!' As he pronounced these words, he started as at a sudden pang; his eyes became fixed, and his posture immovable; yet his senses still remained, and he perceived the Genius once more to stand before him. 'Almorán,' said he, 'to the last sounds which thou shalt hear, let thine ear be attentive! Of the spirits that rejoice to fulfil the purpose of the Almighty, I am one. To Hamet, and

to Almorán, I have been commissioned from above: I have been appointed to perfect virtue, by adversity; and in the folly of her own projects, to entangle vice. The charm, which could be formed only by guilt, has power only to produce misery: of every good, which thou, Almorán, wouldst have secured by disobedience, the opposite evil is thy portion; and of every evil, which thou, Hamet, wast, by obedience, willing to incur, the opposite good is bestowed upon thee. To thee, Hamet, are now given the throne of thy father, and Almeida. And thou, Almorán, who, while I speak, art incorporating with the earth, shalt remain, through all generations, a memorial of the truths which thy life has taught!'

At the words of the Genius, the earth trembled beneath; and above, the walls of the prison disappeared: the figure of Almorán, which was hardened into stone, expanded by degrees; and a rock, by which his form and attitude are still rudely expressed, became at once a monument of his punishment and his guilt!

Such are the events recorded by Acmet, the descendent of the Prophet, and the preacher of righteousness! for, to Acmet, that which passed in secret was revealed by the Angel of Instruction, that the world might know, That, to the wicked, increase of power is increase of wretchedness; and that those who condemn the folly of an attempt to defeat the purpose of a Genius, might no longer hope to elude the appointment of the Most High.

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